

Iran Is Serious in Talks on Removal of the Sanctions and in Implementation of International Commitments But It Distrusts Enemy, Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri Kani Said

IRAN NEWS

Deputy Oil Minister for Gas Affairs Announced on Sunday a Rise in Iran's Natural Gas Exports to Iraq and Set a Deadline for This Country To Pay Its Debt, Adding Iran Is Considering Gas Exports to Europe

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Tehran, Cuba Urged to Jointly Counter Unilateral U.S. Sanctions

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has slammed the United States' broad and unilateral sanctions against Iran and Cuba, saying the two countries should make use of their experience to counter the bans.

Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a Saturday meeting with Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz, who is in Tehran to take part in the 18th session of the Iran-Cuba joint economic committee.

He described Cuba as a strategic partner for Iran and called for the expansion of bilateral cooperation in various fields.

The top Iranian diplomat said the joint economic committee would provide the two countries with an opportunity to discuss ways to enhance economic and trade relations and political cooperation.

Tehran and Havana also enjoy a proper level of cooperation in the sector of health and treatment, particularly the joint production of COVID-19 vaccine, Amir-Abdollahian said, emphasizing that the Iranian administration is determined to implement previous agreements and sign new contracts with Cuba.

Cabrisas, for his part, hailed Iran's constant support for Cuba in the face of the U.S. sanctions.

The Cuban official said the economic committee would help the two countries boost strategic relations and added that tapping into bilateral economic capacities would serve common interests.

Shiite-Sunni Unity a Strategy For Islamic Republic



IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi describes the position of Sunni people and clerics in Iran important in the history of the country and said, “Sunni clerics and thinkers have provided many services in their own country, and Shiites and Sunnis have lived together in Islamic Iran for many years”.

Speaking in a meeting with a group of Sunni scholars and clerics, President Raisi referred to the government's serious efforts to solve people's livelihood problems, and stated, “The government pays attention to the concerns of the people that are conveyed to the clerics and tries to solve these problems”.

Explaining the situation in the country at the time of the inauguration of the 13th Administration, the president said, “Budget deficit of nearly 500 trillion, remaining monthly debt of 10 trillion, death of nearly 700 people a day with coronavirus, unprecedented inflation, injection of the 4k-toman currency to the market and the unfavorable situation of the stocks of basic goods in the country were among the issues that the government was dealing with in the early days after its inauguration”.

Raisi described the payment of the 4k-toman currency as one of the country's problems and stated, “In practice, a large part of what was paid as subsidized exchange rate was in the service of corruption and rent. In fact, we had a waste of the country's resources and subsidies did not reach the people, so in order to prevent this situation from continuing, it was decided to give this amount to the last chain and the main beneficiary, the people and consumers, instead of paying to the first supply chain”.

Emphasizing that paying 400,000 toman per month to each person is a difficult task, but experts consider this method as a step towards approaching justice and eliminating absolute poverty.

In another part of his speech, referring to the important position of Sunni Iranians and scholars in the history of the country, the President said, “You Sunni clerics and thinkers have provided many services in their own country, and Shiites and Sunnis have lived together in Islamic Iran for many years”.

Raisi referred to the request of some Sunni scholars to employ them more in managerial positions and said, “Using qualified people is an important and necessary thing, and the criterion for the government is efficiency, and in every province I go, I emphasized the local forces must be employed more”.

In another part of his speech, he referred to the growth of takfiri movements in the region and said, “We must be careful about the influence of Takfiri and Salafi ideas in the country; British Shiites and Sunni Americans are two sides of the same coin, and both are anti-unity in the Islamic world, while unity is a strategy for the Islamic Republic of Iran, not a tactic”.

Oil Exports Hike 40% Despite Sanctions

TEHRAN, May 15 (MNA) – The CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) said that Iran is seeking to sell its oil at the highest volume possible, adding that the country's exports have witnessed a 40 percent hike in spite of sanctions.

Speaking in a press conference on the sidelines of the 26th International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition, Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr said the imminent contract is aimed at taking optimal advantage of the capabilities of domestic companies for developing the second phase of the North Azadegan oil field and underway South Azadegan field project.

The Oil Ministry has decided to ink the deal, he said, adding the contract will be signed in a couple of months with the consortium that is composed of exploration and production companies.

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ViewPoint
By: Hamid Reza Naghashian

Iran-Qatar Tie Can Be A Model for Region

On Thursday, Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani arrived in Tehran for an official visit and he was warmly welcomed by Iranian officials and it once again showed that if a country acts sincerely, it will get sincere response from the Islamic Republic of Iran and the same did Tehran with Qatar.

In recent years that Iran has been under unilateral and cruel sanctions of the West and the relation between Iran and some Persian Gulf states has been cold or deteriorated, Qatar has been the only Persian Gulf state which has defended Iran and its rights in several issues and the Qatari leader has been behind this support.

On Thursday Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei warmly received Qatari Emir and in the meeting he the Leader said that dialogue among regional countries is the best solution to the existing problems in the region, warning against foreign interference.

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that management of the region does not need any meddling by foreign parties, adding, “Wherever Zionists go, they foment corruption and can give no power or concession to [regional] countries.”

“Therefore, we, as regional countries, must boost our relations as much as we can through common thinking and cooperation,” Ayatollah Khamenei said. The Leader also called for increased political and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Despite friendly political tie between Tehran and Qatar, these two countries have not used their potentials to strengthen their ties in other fields and fortunately the 2022 Soccer World Cup in Qatar will provide this opportunity for both countries to accelerate broadening their joint economic, sport and cultural ties, too.

Iran has great potentials and capacities that Qatar can take advantage it and any cooperation between Tehran and Doha can be to the benefit of both sides but so far these potentials have been ignored. Now under the new Iranian government that its policy is to broaden cooperation with neighboring states, Qatar and Iran can increase their bilateral trade volume.

Tehran and Doha can turn into a role model in the region for other countries in terms of friendship, trust and cooperation and it may encourage other countries in the Persian Gulf to follow them. Qatari Emir has tried to balance its ties with Iran and other countries in the Persian Gulf and even it has not accepted to put Iran under pressure because of Saudi Arabia's demand and bully, and for this reason Qatar pays for it and its tie with Saudi Arabia and the UAE is cold.

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Turkey Rejects Iran Claims That Its Dams Cause Drought

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The Turkish Foreign Ministry yesterday rejected Iranian accusations that its dam-building activities have caused droughts in the region.

“Claims that dams in Turkey cause sand and dust storms in our region are far from scientific,” Turkish foreign ministry spokesman Tanju Bilgic said in a statement.

On Tuesday, Tehran said Turkey's construction of dams on shared waterways was “unacceptable”, calling on its neighbor to stop such activity. Iran has in recent years faced frequent droughts, caused in part by climate change as well as dam construction in neighboring countries.

“In order to prevent sand and dust storms and to mitigate their negative effects, each country must first do its part and take the necessary steps towards sustainable use of water and soil resources,” Bilgic said.

He added that “it is not a realistic approach... for the Tehran administration to blame Turkey for such problems.”

The spokesperson also said that Ankara believes the shared waters between Iran and Turkey were “an element of cooperation rather than conflict”.

“Turkiye is open to any rational and scientific cooperation with Iran regarding this issue,” he added. Neither Turkiye nor Iran is members of the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, pertaining to the uses and conservation of all waters that cross international boundaries.

Lebanese Head to Polls to Elect New Parliament

BEIRUT (Dispatches)- The Lebanese people are voting in key parliamentary elections, which many hope can set the stage for a recovery from economic woes fueled by U.S.-led sanctions on the country.

Polling stations opened at 7:00 a.m. local time (0400 GMT) across 15 electoral districts on Sunday, with nearly four million people eligible to vote and 718 candidates competing to win 128 parliamentary seats.

The vote comes as the country has been rocked by an economic meltdown that the World Bank has blamed on the ruling class and the 2020 devastating port blast in the capital, Beirut.

The economic crisis, which began in 2019, led to a currency collapse of some 95 percent and the plunging of more than 80 percent of the Lebanese population into poverty.

Lebanon's parliament is equally divided between Christians and Muslims.

The last vote in 2018 saw Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement and its allies, the Christian Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) of President Michel Aoun and the Shia Amal party of Speaker Nabih Berri, secure a majority by winning 71 of the parliament's seats.

The absence of former Prime Minister Saad Hariri has left a vacuum for Sunni votes, which both Hezbollah allies and opponents are seeking to fill.

Hezbollah has said it expects few changes to the make-up of the current parliament, though its opponents, including the Saudi-aligned Lebanese Forces party, say they are hoping to scoop up seats from the FPM.

The secretary-general of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement says voters in Lebanon face a choice in the upcoming parliamentary elections between a faction whose main concern is Lebanon and one that seeks to please the United States.

On the eve of the parliamentary elections, the Lebanese president earnestly called on the public to voice their grievances over the country's economic hardships at the ballot boxes.

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Iran Urges Int'l Community to Make Stand Against Zionists' Crimes

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Secretary of Islamic Republic of Iran Human Rights Headquarters Kazem Gharibabadi called on the international community to make a stand against the Zionist regime's "unspeakable crimes".

"How can one expect the blood-thirsty Israeli regime which headshots journalists to respect their dead bodies?" Gharibabadi asked in a Twitter message on Saturday.

"Enjoying the United States' unwavering support for decades, the regime's unspeakable crimes will continue with no end in sight - unless the intl. community makes a stand!" he added.

Gov't Branches Determined to Solve Economic Problems

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN – Majlis Speaker says the government's three branches are determined unanimously to solve economic problems.

The government has granted around \$1.5 billion worth of cash subsidies to more than 23.6 million households in the country to ease shocks that price hikes in consumer goods could cause.

Majlis Speaker appreciated the people for their patience and tact and for helping the government to carry out the economic plan to make the subsidy payment system fair.

At his pre-agenda speech on Sunday, Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf said that regarding implementing the purposed subsidy plan, all the officials in all the institutions emphasize the shore-up of people's purchase power and prosperity.

Elsewhere in his speech, he also condemned the Israeli regime's killing of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh while she was covering developments in Jenin Camp in the northern West Bank, saying: "This heinous crime once again revealed the terrorist nature of the occupying regime, as evidence and witnesses show that the occupying forces targeted her deliberately even though she had adhered to all



professional and security codes for journalists in conflict zones."

Qalibaf also pointed to the occasion of Nakba Day, which marks the anniversary of the establishment of the Israel regime, and recalled that the regime usurped the lands of Palestine through massacring, looting, and making the Palestinians homeless.

He then emphasized that Nakba Day is a reminder of the occupation, genocide, cruelty, and crimes of the Zionists.

By occupying Palestinian land on May 14, 1948, the Zionists laid the foundations for insecurity, instability, crime, and occupation in the region.

This day in the history of Palestine is called "Nakba Day" or "the day of misery."

Qalibaf said that Nakba Day and the proclamation of the illegitimate existence of the usurping Zionist regime are reminiscent of more than seven decades of occupation, genocide, cruelty, and crimes of the Zionists and the displacement of the Palestinians and the occupation of their lands.

Iran, GECF Review Bilateral, Multilateral Cooperation

TEHRAN (Shana) – Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji and Secretary General of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) Mohamed Hamel met on Saturday and reviewed bilateral and multilateral cooperation in energy and energy economics as well as the ways to expand collaboration.

The GECF Secretary General is in Tehran and attended the opening ceremony of the 26th International Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition, Iran Oil Show, which kicked off on Friday (May 13). He also addressed a meeting held on the second day of the event.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Hamel said natural gas is a fuel which helps developing countries with sustainable development and its importance is obvious to all.

Iran was among the first countries that reclaimed sovereignty over its oil resources, he said, adding Iran is a founder of OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) and enjoys one of the largest proven natural gas reserves in the globe and has a prominent position in the energy world.

Iran was a founder of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum in 2001 and the 3rd GECF Summit was held in Tehran in 2015 which I had the honor to take part in, he stated.

Cuba Seeks Iran's Help To Expand Its Mines



TEHRAN (PresSTV) - Cuba is seeking Iran's help to expand its mining and metals sector as the two countries move to raise their economic cooperation to a new level. Cuba's Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz told Iran's industries minister Reza Fatemi Amin on Saturday that his country will need Iran's technological support, including the know-how to carry out complicated geological surveys, to expand mines in the Caribbean island nation.

"Iran can be of major help to Cuba in production and excavation of minerals including nickel, iron, lead and gold," Cabrisas Ruiz was quoted as saying by IRNA agency during a meeting with Fatemi Amin in Tehran.

The Cuban deputy PM is in Iran on top of a senior economic and trade delegation to attend a two-day summit of Iran-Cuba Joint Economic Commission.

Iran and Cuba have increased their cooperation in recent years as the two nations continue to face American pressure in various economic fields.

The two nations signed a major contract in 2021 to develop and manufacture a flagship coronavirus vaccine in Iran.

Iran's Fatemi Amin said after meeting Cabrisas Ruiz that Iran and Cuba have a huge potential to engage in joint manufacturing and trade endeavors in the future.

Fatemi Amin said that government experts in the two countries have identified at least 34 fields of cooperation where the two nations can expand their ties, including in the production of pharmaceuticals, home appliances and in large-scale mining and metals projects.

Iran Determined to Strike Good, Sustainable Deal in Vienna Talks

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has said that his country is determined to reach a good and lasting agreement on the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal.

Amirabdollahian made the remark in a phone conversation with his Greek counterpart Nikos Dendias on Saturday night. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action got into trouble in May 2018 when the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from it and imposed sanctions on Iran.

Iran and the remaining signatories began talks in Vienna in April 2021 to revive the accord which is known as the JCPOA. Amirabdollahian talked to his Greek counterpart about the Vienna talks and said Iran is determined to reach a lasting agreement.

The two officials also discussed Tehran-Athens relations.

The top Iranian diplomat said that the two countries have numerous capacities to expand their trade and economic cooperation. Dendias, on his part, also stressed the importance of developing relations between the two sides.

Volume of Trafficked Goods Is Too High for Individual Smugglers

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Police spokesperson says the volume of goods being trafficked from and to the country is so high that cannot be carried out by individual smugglers.

Brigadier General Mehdi Hajian said in a press conference on Sunday that 3.3 million liters of vegetable oil, over 5.3 tons of wheat and flour, 3.3 thousand tons of rice, and 2.7 thousand tons of animal feed have been discovered and confiscated from smugglers and hoarders during the past two months.

He added that 1,284 people have been arrested in connection with the smuggling, noting that the total value of the confiscated goods is estimated to be about 9,000 billion rials (about \$30 million).

Saying that such figures are alarming, he called for more efficient regulations and supervision over the supply chains, implying that such amounts of goods can only be smuggled through organized crime or with the help of the authorities.

Hajian also said the volume of goods trafficked to the country is also too high to be the work of individual smugglers via border crossings.

In February, the head of Iran's Headquarters for Combating Smuggling of Goods and Foreign Exchange said the volume of smuggled goods is at least \$12.5 billion and only one-third of the goods involved is discovered. Ali Moayeddi Khorramabadi noted that due to political conditions and economic sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic, trade is not conducted in accordance with international laws, therefore a lot of commodities are smuggled in or out of the country.

Tehran, Moscow Open Joint Technology Center in SPbPU

TEHRAN (MNA) - Iran-Russia joint technology center was opened in the Peter the Great St.Petersburg Polytechnic University with the aim of developing cooperation between the two countries in the field of technology.

The center has an independent management office and several joint halls for holding seminars, face-to-face meetings, and joint and specialized courses for technology companies.

The most important services of the center are facilitating the transfer and exchange of technology between Iranian and Russian companies and exporting high-tech products of Iranian companies to Russia and vice versa, providing a suitable space for holding joint meetings of companies, marketing high-tech products of knowledge-based companies, providing legal services for concluding contracts, and developing long-term research programs in priority areas.

So far, 17 projects have been identified by Iranian knowledge-based companies and five by Russian technology companies which currently, seven of them are in the process of concluding contracts for the purchase, transfer and export of technology, as well as joint production in Iran.

Lule Gostar Co., NISOC Sign MoU on Cooperation

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – On the second day of Iran Show 22, Lule Gostar of Esfarayen Co. and National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to cooperate on quality project of technical integrating quality of oil pipelines.

In the meeting, the CEO of Lule Gostar of Esfarayen Co. Mr. Maziar Zand and the CEO of NISOC signed the MoU on this project which has been designed and prepared to meet Iran's oil industries in the field of providing the king pipes.

According to Mr. Zand, implementation of this project will lead to the increase in the production capacity, reduction of waste and improvement of the production quality of this strategic product.

He went on to say that this agreement is the ground for manufacturing products with quality higher than required standards like API.

Lule Gostar of Esfarayen Company is subsidiary of IDRO and ministry of industry, mine and trade and it is the only manufacturer of big oil pipes and NISOC is of the biggest subsidiaries of the oil ministry which produces over 60% of the oil of the country.



Arvandan Co., NISOC Sign MoU for 2-Year Cooperation

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

Arvandan Oil and Gas Company and National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) signed the MoU for a two-year cooperation in the technical, operational and specialized sections.

According to reports, according to the reports, the signed MoU will cover cooperation in the fields of repair of industrial equipment and processing machineries, technical services of the wells, drilling services and using repaired rigs, lab services and engineering studies and educational services.

In the ceremony of signing the MoU, the CEO of Arvandan Oil and Gas Company Mr. Abdullah Azari Ahvazi announced expansion of bilateral cooperation between this company with NISOC and said that all are trying to take big steps for the development of the country and this will be possible only through the unity between the big companies of the oil industry group. He went on to say that NISOC is the biggest oil company of Iran and one of the biggest in the world where the issue of human resource is in a very high level.

Azari noted that Arvandan Co. intends to expand its cooperation with NISOC which will lead to the considerable development actions. Then the CEO of NISOC said that today he witnessed a good event between NISOC and Arvandan Co. He went on to say that Arvandan Co. is one of the valuable part of the oil industry group of the country and it has joint fields which are considered in developing the joint reservoirs.



Malaysia Seeks Boosting Tourism Ties With Iran

BY: F. TAHERPOOR

TEHRAN – A delegation from Malaysian tourism industry activists led by Director General of Tourism Malaysia Dato Zainuddin Abdul Wahab on Saturday met Iranian tourism industry activists and exchanged views on boosting cooperation in the field of tourism between the two countries.

After meeting with some officials of Iranian travel agencies as hotel officials, the Malaysian officials attended a press conference to brief the media on the goals of this visit to Tehran.

Mr. Abdul Wahab first briefed the reporters of the current tourism condition in Malaysia and said Malaysia reopened its border to tourists on May 1 and now the country is ready to host tourists from every country. He said that the pandemic affected tourism industry in Malaysia and according to the prediction of the UNWTO, it will take two or three years Malaysian tourism industry to return to the pre-pandemic condition in 2019.

He went on to say that during the pandemic and closure of the borders, Malaysia worked hard to improve the infrastructures for attracting more tourists and the country has earmarked over 8.6b ringgit credit for tourism infrastructures for attracting 2m tourists by the yearend.

He said that during this period, Malaysia has constructed or renovated its tourist resorts and parks in order that the country can compete in tourism with other countries.

On cooperation with Iran on tourism, Abdul Wahab reiterated that Iran is one of the important markets in the Middle East for Malaysia and his country has focused on Iranian families and his delegation has talked with Iranian travel agencies.

He went on to say that Malaysia for some years due to the pandemic and other problems had lost Iran's market but Malaysia is determined to provide suitable condition for return of Iranian tourists to Malaysia and it is in talks with Iranian tour operators and travel agencies. He invited media and reporters to help the condition to return to the pre-pandemic era.

He reiterated that Iran is important for Malaysia and for this reason this country is the first destination for the delegation for talks, noting that Malaysia is cheaper than countries like Singapore.

Then Senior Director at International Promotion Division Asia/Africa of Tourism Malaysia Mr. Manoharan Periasamy

said that Tourism Malaysia has signed agreements with Emirates and Qatar Airways for increasing flights to Malaysia and it will help tourists from Iran and other West Asian countries to easily travel to Malaysia. He reiterated that the goal of Tourism Malaysia is to offer best and quality services with the lowest cost.

He said Malaysia is one of the best countries in terms of transportation for tourists as the visitors can have access to their tourist attractions in the shortest time.

Meanwhile Charge d'Affaires of Malaysia in Tehran Mr. Nizam Halimi said that the embassy tries to encourage Malaysian tourists to come to Iran but encouragement is not by itself enough and Iran like Malaysia should improve its tourism infrastructures in the international levels.

He said Iran is a beautiful country with four seasons and many Malaysians inquire for visiting the country and the embassy helps them. On trade between the two countries, he said both countries have worked hard to increase their trade volume and their trade was some \$1b in 2020. He also invited Iranians to attend an exhibition on halal products which is to be held in Malaysia.

Meanwhile Abdul Wahab reiterated that Tourism Malaysia has plans in Iran for promoting tourism of his country and called on the media for promotion.

Meanwhile Chairman of Iran Travel Agencies Association Mr. Hormatollah Rafiei welcomed efforts to cooperate in tourism between Iran and Malaysia and said the flight between Iran and Malaysia is the main hurdle for boosting tourism but he is sure Iranians will choose Malaysia as their tourist destination. He reiterated that there are still many people who like to visit Malaysia and both countries should start joint promotional programs. He also urged Malaysia officials to encourage their nationals to visit Iran and it will encourage the airlines to increase flights between the two states.

After the press conference and in a meeting, some of Malaysian tourism activists and hotel and resorts representatives had brief presentations about the services that they can provide for visitors.



(From Left) Hormatollah Rafiei, Zainuddin Abdul Wahab, Manoharan Periasamy, Nizam Halimi and Marketing Manager of Tourism Malaysia in Iran Mr. Farhad Jafari are seen at the press conference

Historical and Classic Cars Show Held in Shiraz



Dr. Ahmad Ghasempour: Ghasempour Trading Complex has defined programs for support of holding special programs. The management of Ghasempour Commercial Complex on the sidelines of the big exhibition of historical cars in Shiraz, while supporting the programs aimed at cultural, tourism and economic development of Shiraz and Fars province, said: The big exhibition of historical cars in Shiraz is a very valuable opportunity and it is appropriate to be able to introduce Fars and Shiraz and the historical and cultural attractions of this province and the city of Shiraz through international ambassadors such as the International Automobile Federation in a way that suits them and the status of Shiraz.

The presence of Mr. Tiddo Bresters, President of the Federation International des Véhicules Anciens or FIVA (The International Federation for Historic Vehicles)

In this exhibition, it shows the position and importance of this important conference and event, and this opportunity can be used to hold this conference as glorious as possible and create a good memory for him and his companions in the decisions of Mr. Tiddo and the group under his management to the program. The plans of the federation to create suitable exhibition opportunities in the city of Shiraz have a great impact. At the end of the conference, Dr. Ghasempour thanked all the managers and those involved in the conference, including Dr. Alavi, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Dr. Abdolkarim Yeganeh, representative of the Automobile Department, Tourism and Automobile Association in Fars Province, and especially the police and security and law enforcement agencies. This important event and conference contributed thanks.

Simultaneously with the general conference of historical and classic cars, a new product of Modiran Khodro Company named X55 Pro MVM was unveiled in Shiraz

Abdolkarim Yeganeh, a representative of the Automobile, Iran Tourism and Automobile Association in Fars Province, said on the sidelines of the conference: «Shiraz is one of the hubs of historical vehicles in Iran and this valuable capacity can be used in tourism, economic and political fields.» Stating that this big conference was held in cooperation with the National Club of Historic Vehicles, he said: One of the purposes of this conference was to visit the capacities of Fars Province, President of the International Federation of Historic Vehicles, and in parallel with the lovers of old cars in the park. The Drag Mountains of Shiraz came together. Yeganeh, referring to some of the province's



capacities in the field of historical vehicles, said: This event was accompanied by the commercial support of Ghasempour with an unparalleled welcome from enthusiasts, especially the youth, who exhibited 100 classic and historical vehicles.

The capacity of Shiraz metropolis for turning into the pole of historical cars

The representative of Iran Automobile, Tourism and Automobile Association in Fars province pointed out: there are more than 250 historical vehicles in the province and also 170 vehicles are being reconstructed, and therefore it is predicted that there are about one thousand historical vehicles in Shiraz. Can make this metropolis one of the prominent poles of historical cars. Yeganeh also stated that the purpose of holding classical and historical conferences, in addition to showing the beauty and evolution of the production of world car brands, is to renew the memory with these cars in order to preserve these valuable works. He reminded that the conference was held in the presence of the President of the International Federation of Historic Vehicles in order to stimulate the lives of citizens and car enthusiasts, and Iran, despite all the limitations, has one of the most advanced car



reconstruction industries in the world. Saz assessed job creation and added: «Many jobs such as refiners, painters, spare parts and many jobs are being sought for the reconstruction of historic cars.»

Consultations for setting up a museum of historical cars in Shiraz

The representative of the Automobile Department, Iran Tourism and Automobile Association in Fars province informed about the efforts made to set up a museum of historical cars in Shiraz and added: «We hope that with the cooperation of the Cultural Heritage Organization, a suitable place will be allocated for the establishment of a museum of historical cars.» He appreciated the constant cooperation of the police, law enforcement and security agencies, Shiraz Municipality and Ghasempour Commerce in organizing the conference, saying: «Many provinces had made great efforts to host the President of the International Federation of Historic Vehicles and in We finally managed to host this international official in Fars and Shiraz provinces. According to the only tourism and automobile center of the Islamic Republic of Iran, it is the representative of the International Automobile Federation and the programs organized by this group have many cultural attachments and can play an effective role in tourism, economic and political fields.

Countering Iranophobia with the presence of tourists

He added: «One of the main goals of this center is to invite tourists to visit Iran and the city of Shiraz, and the presence of foreign tourists has a valuable role in countering Iranophobia and enemy conspiracies, and through such events we can increase the level of security and authority of the country.» Bring better and more to the ears of the world.

Yeganeh added: «When the world is informed of the presence of the President of the International Federation of Historic Vehicles in Iran and Shiraz, they will be encouraged to visit our country, and for this reason, if the Fars Tourism and Automobile Center is supported, we can achieve

achievements in the year.» Macroeconomic equivalent to thirty to thirty-five billion tomans to bring tourism to the province.



Appreciating Ghasempour Trading, Tiddo Bresters said: I got acquainted with the 1000-year-old heritage of Iran and Fars Province

Following the conference, «Tiddo Bresters», President of the International Federation of Historic Vehicles (FIVA), while visiting the unique historical cars of Shiraz and talking with their owners, said: «Fortunately, car lovers have a serious determination to maintain historical and classic cars, which is commendable.» Appreciating Ghasempour's commercial support for the conference and car events, he said: «Although I am thousands of kilometers away from my country, the hospitality of the people of Shiraz has been so good and sincere that I feel I am in my homeland.» According to Tiddo Bresters, during this trip, I got acquainted with the heritage of Iran for several thousand years, and the historical cars that were displayed in this conference are very beautiful and eye-catching. He expressed hope that in the near future he will be the guest of the passionate and cultured people of Shiraz again and appreciated the support and hospitality of Ghasempour's business and appreciated the role of the sponsors of these conferences in preserving and maintaining historical vehicles. In the capital, Tiddo Bresters unveiled for the first time a special identity card for historic cars. Expressed satisfaction. At the end of the ceremony, the new product of car managers called X55 pro was unveiled among the wide welcome of citizens and car enthusiasts.

Tourism industry as a clean economic model



Seyyed Mojtaba Alavi, Director General of Culture of the Deputy of Tourism and Pilgrim Affairs of Fars Province, stated that Shiraz is considered as the tourism hub of the country and this branch and fields of tourism, including health, literature, pilgrimage, culture, etc., this vast province will witness. We are, he said: the tourism industry has its fans and today in this regard, a conference on old cars was held and was well received by the youth and citizens of Shiraz. Alavi said: «We are trying to use the tourism industry as a clean economic model.»

The place for world registration of historic cars is provided

Also, Salehpour, the head of the country's historical vehicles group, said at the ceremony: «With the

cooperation of the Iranian Tourism and Automobile Association and the efforts made in this field in Fars province, the possibility of global registration of historical vehicles has been provided.» He mentioned the presence of «Tiddo Bresters», President of the International Federation of Historic Cars in Shiraz, as an important step for the development of classic cars and added: «We hope to see the realization of great goals for those interested in this field with the support provided in this field.» Poor pointed out that Ghasempour's commercial support played a valuable role in organizing this event.

FIVA President's Visit to the Conference on Historic Vehicles in Shiraz

Dr. Ahmad Ghasempour: Ghasempour Trading Complex has defined programs to support the holding of special programs. The management of Ghasempour Commercial Complex on the sidelines of the big exhibition of historical cars in Shiraz, while supporting the programs aimed at cultural, tourism and economic development of Shiraz and Fars province, said: The big exhibition of historical cars in Shiraz is a very valuable opportunity and it is appropriate to be able to introduce Fars and Shiraz and the historical and cultural attractions of this province and the city of Shiraz through international ambassadors such as the International Automobile Federation in a way that suits them and the status of Shiraz.



The presence of Mr. Tiddo Bresters, President of the FIVA

In this exhibition, it shows the position and importance of this important conference and event, and this opportunity can be used to hold this conference as glorious as possible and create a good memory for him and his companions in the decisions of Mr. Tiddo and the group under his management to the program. The plans of the federation to create suitable exhibition opportunities in the city of Shiraz have a great impact. At the end of the conference, Dr. Ghasempour thanked all the managers and those involved in the conference, including Dr. Alavi, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Dr. Abdolkarim Yeganeh, representative of the Automobile Department, Tourism and Automobile Association in Fars Province, and especially the police and security and law enforcement agencies. Abdul Karim Yeganeh, a representative of the Automobile, Tourism and Automobile Association of Iran in Fars province, said: «With the cooperation of the National Historic Vehicles Club, a conference will be held to visit the President of the International Federation of Historic Vehicles and lovers of old cars.» It was held in the Dark Mountain Park of Shiraz. Historical, in addition to showing the beauty and evolution of the production of world car brands and also reminiscing with these cars, will be an effort to preserve these valuable works that have been for years by the National Club of Historic Cars in It is a pursuit. In this conference, Mr. Tiddo Bresters, President of the International Federation of Historic Vehicles called FIVA, closely visited the unique historical vehicles of Shiraz and talked to their owners. History unveiled some of the highlights for him were the historic cars that were properly maintained and rebuilt, and expressed satisfaction with the love and hospitality of the Shirazis (citizens of Shiraz).

North Korea's Kim Says COVID Great Turmoil

SEOUL (Dispatches) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said the spread of COVID-19 had thrust his country into "great turmoil" and called for an all-out battle to overcome the outbreak, as 21 daily deaths were reported among people with fever.

North Korea this week acknowledged for the first time a COVID outbreak, imposing a nationwide lockdown. But there was no sign of a rigorous testing or treatment campaign in the isolated country's rudimentary healthcare system. "The spread of the malignant epidemic is a great turmoil to fall on our country since the founding," Kim told an emergency meeting of the ruling Workers' Party, according to state news agency KCNA.



China Withdraws as Host of 2023 Asian Cup Due Pandemic

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - China withdrew as host of soccer's 2023 Asian Cup on Saturday in the latest cancellation of the country's sports hosting duties during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Asian Football Confederation praised Chinese soccer officials for making "this very difficult but necessary decision in the collective interests of the AFC Asian Cup."

The 24-nation tournament was due to be played in 10 cities in mostly newly built stadiums in June and July of next year. China's withdrawal could let Qatar or Saudi Arabia step up as hosts while both are bidding in a contest to host the 2027 edition. India and Iran are also candidates for the 2027 edition with a decision expected early next year.



Ukraine Wages Counteroffensive Against Russian Forces in East



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian forces have launched a counteroffensive near the Russian-held town of Iziom in eastern Ukraine, a regional governor said, in what could prove a serious setback for Moscow's plans to capture the entire Donbas region.

Russian forces have focused much of their firepower on the Donbas in a "second phase" of their invasion that was announced on April 19, after they failed to reach the capital Kyiv from the north in the early weeks of the war.

But Ukraine has been retaking territory in its northeast, driving the Russians away from the second-largest Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. Keeping up pressure on Iziom and Russian supply lines will make it harder for Moscow to encircle battle-hardened Ukrainian troops on the eastern front in the Donbas.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also said complex talks were underway to find a way to evacuate a large number of wounded soldiers from a besieged steel works in the port of Mariupol in return for the release of Russian prisoners of war.

Mariupol, which has suffered the heaviest fighting in nearly three months of war, is now in Russian hands but hundreds of Ukrainian fighters are still holding out at the Azovstal steel works despite weeks of heavy Russian bombardment.

Western military analysts say Russian President Vladimir Putin and his generals failed to anticipate such fierce Ukrainian resistance when they launched the invasion on Feb. 24.

As well as losing large numbers of men and much military equipment, Russia has been hit by economic sanctions. The Group of Seven leading Western economies pledged in a statement on Saturday to "further increase economic and political pressure on Russia" and to supply more weapons to Ukraine.

Commenting on the latest developments in eastern Ukraine, regional governor Oleh Sinegovov said in comments aired on social media: "The hottest spot remains the Iziom direction."

"Our armed forces have switched to a counteroffensive there. The enemy is retreating on some fronts and this is the result of the character of our armed forces," he said.

Moscow's invasion, which it calls a "special operation" to disarm Ukraine and protect it from fascists, has jolted European security. Kyiv and its Western allies say the fascism assertion is a baseless pretext for an unprovoked war of aggression.

The war has prompted Finland to abandon its military neutrality and seek membership of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). Sweden is widely expected to follow suit.

Finnish President Sauli Niinisto told Putin by phone that his country, which shares a 1,300 km (800 mile) border with Russia, wanted to join NATO to bolster its own security.

Putin told Niinisto it would be a mistake for Helsinki to abandon its neutrality, the Kremlin said, adding that the move could harm bilateral relations.

Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Elected UAE President After Brother's Death

DUBAI (Dispatches) - The UAE's long-time de facto ruler Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan was elected as president on Saturday, official media said, a day after the death of former leader Sheikh Khalifa.

The 61-year-old was unanimously elected by the Federal Supreme Council, WAM news agency said, becoming the ruler of the oil-rich country founded by his father in 1971.

Sheikh Mohamed, often known as 'MBZ', met members of the Federal Supreme Council, made up of rulers of the UAE's seven emirates, as the country enters a period of mourning for his half-brother Sheikh Khalifa.

Sheikh Mohamed's ascension, which was widely expected, formalizes his position as leader of the desert state of 10 million after years of calling the shots while Sheikh Khalifa was sidelined by poor health.

Under his low-key direction, the United Arab Emirates has put a man in space, sent a probe to Mars and opened its first nuclear reactor, while using its oil-funded clout to develop a more assertive foreign policy.

Closely allied with Saudi Arabia, it has emerged as a leader of a reshaped Middle East since the retreat of traditional Arab powers and the reduced involvement of the United States, forging ties with Israel and joining a war against Iran-backed militants in Yemen.

Official media had already named Sheikh Mohamed as the ruler of Abu Dhabi, the UAE's richest emirate, on Friday, inheriting one of the main titles held by Sheikh Khalifa who died at 73.

Sheikh Mohamed, wearing a light grey kandura or robe, was a pall-bearer at the funeral prayers for his elder brother who was laid to rest in Abu Dhabi's Al Bateen Cemetery just hours after his death was announced, in accordance with Muslim tradition.

Flags are at half-mast around the UAE and businesses and government offices are closed for three days as the country enters a 40-day period of mourning for Sheikh Khalifa, who had ruled since 2004.



Hungary's New President Condemns Putin's Aggression

BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Hungary's President Katalin Novak at her inauguration ceremony on Saturday condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and said her first trip would take her to Poland, in an apparent gesture to mend relations with Warsaw.

Hungary's rejection of sending weapons shipments to neighbouring Ukraine and its opposition to a planned European Union embargo on Russian oil imports has weighed on relations between Budapest and Warsaw, whose two nationalist governments have been long-time allies in the EU.

Novak, a former Fidesz party lawmaker and ally of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, was elected to the largely ceremonial post of president in March, shortly before Orbán won another landslide victory in elections on April 3.

Hungary's first woman president, Novak has served as deputy chair of Fidesz and was family affairs minister in Orbán's previous government.

"On Tuesday, 17 May, I am travelling to Warsaw to meet the President of the Polish people. Mr. President, dear Andrzej (Duda), I thank you for the opportunity to talk as befits friends!" Novak said in her inauguration speech.

"We condemn Putin's aggression, the armed invasion of a sovereign state. We say eternally no to every effort aiming at the restoration of the Soviet Union," she added.

She said the war in Ukraine was also "fought against us peace-loving Hungarians", adding that Hungary demanded that war crimes be investigated and punished.

Orbán has also condemned Russia's attack on Ukraine but has avoided personal criticism of President Vladimir Putin and has been strongly opposed to any sanctions on Russian energy.

Dependence on Russian oil in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia poses the biggest obstacle to an embargo deal that the European Commission, the EU executive, proposed in early May in response to Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

Israeli Police Attack on Abu Akleh Mourners Sparks Outcry

GAZA (Dispatches) - Attacks by Israeli forces on mourners of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh have sparked condemnation, with the United Nations and the United States describing the scenes as "deeply disturbing" - although the U.S. stopped short of explicitly condemning Israel for the violence.

Thousands of people gathered in occupied East Jerusalem on Friday for the funeral of the veteran Al Jazeera journalist, two days after she was shot dead by Israeli forces while covering a raid in the occupied West Bank.

As her body left St Joseph Hospital, Israeli police attacked the funeral procession - nearly forcing pallbearers to drop Abu Akleh's coffin. Israeli forces seized Palestinian flags from mourners and later smashed the window of the hearse carrying Abu Akleh's body and removed a Palestinian flag. The Jerusalem Red Crescent said 33 people were injured in the attacks and six were hospitalised. Israeli authorities said six people were arrested after mourners threw "rocks and glass bottles".

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he was "deeply disturbed" by the violence, according to a spokesman.

The European Union said it was "appalled by the violence in the St Joseph Hospital compound and the level of unnecessary force exercised by Israeli police throughout the funeral procession".

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the U.S. was

"deeply troubled to see the images of Israeli police intruding into her funeral procession today ... Every family deserves to be able to lay their loved ones to rest in a dignified and unimpeded manner".

White House press secretary Jen Psaki also called the images "deeply disturbing".

She said the focus should have been on "marking the memory of a remarkable journalist who lost her life".

"We regret the intrusion into what should have been a peaceful procession," she added.

But when U.S. President Joe Biden was later asked by reporters whether he explicitly condemned the Israeli actions at the funeral, he said: "I don't know all the details, but I know it has to be investigated."

On Saturday, the foundation of late South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, said scenes of Israeli police attacking the pallbearers were "chillingly reminiscent" of what happened during the funerals of anti-apartheid activists.

Al Jazeera said in a statement that the Israeli police's attack on the funeral procession "violates all international norms and rights".

"Al Jazeera Media Network denounces this violence in the strongest terms, and holds the Israeli government fully responsible for the safety and security of all the mourners and the family of our colleague Shireen."



Somalia Set to Hold Overdue Presidential Election

MOGADISHU (Dispatches) - Somalia is set to hold its long-delayed presidential vote this weekend, ending the convoluted electoral process that raised tensions in the country when the president's term expired last year without a successor in place.

Authorities have registered 39 presidential candidates for Sunday's election, a list that includes incumbent Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, two former presidents, several top officials, and one woman - Fawzia Yusuf Haji Adam, a legislator who once served as Somalia's foreign minister.

The vote will take place amid heightened insecurity as the al-Qaeda-linked armed group al-Shabab, which opposes the federal government, continues to stage lethal attacks in the capital and elsewhere in the Horn of Africa nation.

In recent months, al-Shabab has repeatedly tested the defences of the Halane military camp, which is protected by African Union peacekeepers. A suicide bombing on Wednesday killed at least four people, including two government soldiers, at a checkpoint near the heavily fortified airport area where legislators will meet on Sunday to choose a new president.

At a news conference on Saturday, police spokesman Abdifatah Aden announced a full curfew in the capital, Mogadishu, covering traffic and people, from Saturday at 9pm (18:00 GMT) until Monday at 6am (03:00 GMT).

Lawmakers, security personnel and all others officials involved in the vote are still free to move during those hours.

The indirect election, in which legislators pick the president, will take place at an airport hangar behind blast walls to help fend off potential attacks or meddling by factions within the security services.

The vote is behind schedule by 15 months and Somali authorities faced a May 17 deadline to hold the vote or risk losing key funding from international donors.

President Mohamed - who is also known as Farmaajo - faces a tough battle for re-election. He has been locked in a power struggle with his prime minister, Mohamed Hussein Roble, over control of the government and could play a decisive role in the outcome of the vote.



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marble fl
Fully Furn

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S, J, balcony
marble floor
Fully Furn

Farmanieh Apt (\$2400)
240sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, pkg, F.F

Zaferanieh (\$3000)
250sq.m, 3bdrs, S/p
Sauna, Jacuzzi, pkg
Fully Furn

Darrous bldg (\$8000)
5stoery, 20bdrs
S, J, balcony
pkgs

Pasdaran (\$1900)
200sq.m, 3bdrs
S/p, S, J, pkg
balcony, & F.F

Vanak (\$1700)
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Eni Set to Open Roubles Account for Russia Gas

MILAN (Dispatches) - Italian energy group Eni will begin the process of opening an account in roubles next week to pay for Russian gas unless it is told that would breach sanctions, three sources close to the matter said.

In March, Russian President Vladimir Putin said the world's largest natural gas producer would require countries he terms "unfriendly" to pay for fuel in roubles, in response to sweeping Western sanctions imposed after Moscow invaded Ukraine.

European gas importers have spent weeks seeking clarity from their governments and Brussels as they fear paying in roubles could contravene sanctions, while refusing to do so could trigger major supply disruptions.



G7 to Continue Economic Pressure On Russia, Tackle Wheat War

WEISSENHAUS (Dispatches) - Group of Seven foreign ministers vowed to reinforce Russia's economic and political isolation, continue supplying weapons to Ukraine and tackle what Germany's Foreign Minister described as a "wheat war" being waged by Moscow.

After meeting at a 400-year-old castle estate in the Baltic Sea resort of Weissenhaus, senior diplomats from Britain, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, the United States and the European Union also pledged to continue their military and defense assistance for "as long as necessary".

They would also tackle what they called Russian misinformation aimed at blaming the West for food supply issues around the world due to economic sanctions on Moscow and urged China to not assist Moscow or justify Russia's war, according to a joint statement.

"Have we done enough to mitigate the consequences of this war? It is not our war. It's a war by the president of Russia, but we have global responsibility," Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock told reporters at a closing news conference.

Key to putting more pressure on Russia is to ban or phase out buying Russian oil with EU member states expected next week to reach an agreement on the issue even if it remains at this stage opposed by Hungary.

"We will expedite our efforts to reduce and end reliance on Russian energy supplies and as quickly as possible, building on G7 commitments to phase out or ban imports of Russian coal and oil," the statement said. The ministers said they would add further sanctions on Russian elites, including economic actors, central government institutions and the military, which enable President Vladimir Putin "to lead his war of choice."

The meeting in northern Germany, which the foreign ministers of Ukraine and Moldova attended, also spotlighted food security concerns and fears that the war in Ukraine could spill over into its smaller neighbour Moldova.

"People will be dying in Africa and the Middle East and we are faced with an urgent question: how can people be fed around the world? People are asking themselves what will happen if we don't have the grain we need that we used to get from Russia and Ukraine," Baerbock said. She added that the G7 would work on finding logistical solutions to get vital commodities out of Ukraine storage before the next harvests.

Attention now turns to Berlin as ministers meet later today with Sweden and Finland gearing up to apply for membership of the transatlantic alliance, drawing threats of retaliation from Moscow and objections from NATO member Turkey.

"It is important that we have a consensus," Canada's Foreign Minister Melanie Joly told reporters when asked about Turkey possibly blocking their accession.

Putin calls the invasion a "special military operation" to disarm Ukraine and rid it of anti-Russian nationalism fomented by the West. Ukraine and its allies say Russia launched an unprovoked war.

"More of the same," EU Foreign Policy chief Josep Borrell told reporters. "The one thing that is missing is pushing for a diplomatic engagement to get a ceasefire. It is missing because Vladimir Putin has been saying to everybody that he doesn't want to stop the war."

U.S. Consumer Sentiment Approaches 11-Year Low

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - U.S. consumer sentiment slumped to its lowest level in nearly 11 years in early May as worries about inflation persisted, but household spending remains underpinned by a strong labor market and massive savings, which should keep the economy expanding.

The University of Michigan's survey showed the deterioration in sentiment, which some economists said pushed it into recessionary territory, was across all demographics, as well as geographical and political affiliation. Gasoline prices and the stock market have a heavy weighting in the survey.

Gasoline prices resumed their upward trend this month, setting an average record high of \$4.432 per gallon on Friday, according to AAA. Fears that the Federal Reserve will have to aggressively tighten monetary policy to bring down inflation have unleashed a massive equities sell-off on Wall Street.

"But confidence has been a poor guide to consumption growth in recent years, so we would not read too much into that signal," said Michael Pearce, a senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics in New York. "Just because consumers resent paying higher prices and are suffering limited availability doesn't mean they aren't still making those purchases."

The University of Michigan's preliminary consumer sentiment index tumbled 9.4% to 59.1 early this month, the lowest reading since August 2011. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the index dipping to 64. The sharp decline is in stark contrast with the Conference Board's consumer confidence survey, whose index remains well above the COVID-19 pandemic lows.



Japan, U.S. to Agree to Semiconductor Cooperation at Leaders' Talks

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Japan and the United States will agree to commit to improved research and production of semiconductors at a leaders' summit set for May 23, a Japanese government source said.

The expected agreement between Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and U.S. President Joe Biden will aim for a framework ensuring availability of domestic semiconductor stocks in emergencies and deeper economic security cooperation between the United States and Japan, according to the source.

Dependence on South Korean and Taiwanese output is of increasing concern as China expands its military power and influence in East Asia. A joint statement is also being considered, the source said, with adjustments under way to also refer to increased cooperation in new defense areas including in outer space and cyberspace.

The coronavirus pandemic brought worldwide shortages of semiconductors into focus. How to reliably obtain the key technology when war, disasters and other contingencies emerge has become a major issue.

Semiconductors are used in a diversity of electrical products and devices. While Japan had half of the world's semiconductor market share in the late 1980s, in recent years it accounts for only about 10 percent.

During the summit, Kishida and Biden are expected to agree on production, research and development of sophisticated semiconductors, and creating a system for the countries to share parts supplies for domestic manufacturing, according to the source. Both governments are also moving toward creating a working group for joint research of cutting-edge semiconductors, the source added.

Washington is preparing to launch its Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, known as IPEF, to coincide with Biden's first visit to Japan since taking office.

The Tokyo-backed plan to respond to China's multinational "Belt and Road" economic initiative is designed to facilitate fair trade and improved supply chains on products including semiconductors.

Kishida called the government's previous semiconductor policy a "failure" during a Friday meeting with technology industry officials from Japan and the United States. He added that he wants the leaders' summit to be an opportunity to accelerate both countries' cooperation.

Taliban's First Annual Afghan Budget Foresees \$501m Deficit

KABUL (Dispatches) - Afghanistan faces a budget deficit of 44 billion Afghanis (\$501 million) this financial year, the country's Taliban authorities said on Saturday without clarifying how the gap between expected revenues and planned spending will be met.

Announcing the first annual national budget since the Taliban took over the war-torn country in August last year, Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi said the government foresaw spending of 231.4 billion Afghanis and domestic revenue of 186.7 billion.

"The revenues are collections from departments related to customs, ministries and mines," spokesman for the Finance Ministry Ahmad Wali Haqmal said.

Since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, successive Western-backed governments relied mostly on foreign aid. In August 2021, foreign forces withdrew from Afghanistan, leading to the collapse of the government and a Taliban takeover.

The world is yet to officially recognize the Taliban government. The country is dealing with rising security issues and an economic meltdown, while aid agencies figure out how to help 50 million Afghans without giving the Taliban direct access to funds.

Hanafi said the budget for the current financial year that runs to next February, had been approved by the council of ministries and confirmed by the Taliban's supreme leader Haibatullah Akhuzada, and would use local funds only.

Development works would take up 27.9 billion Afghanis, he said, but did not provide a breakdown of spending on areas such as defense.

"We have paid attention to education, technical education, and higher education and our all focus is on how to pave the way education for everyone," Hanafi said.

Taliban authorities are yet to allow the restarting of older girls' education across the country after committing to a start date earlier this year.

India Bans Wheat Exports As Heatwave Hurts Crop, Domestic Prices Soar

MUMBAI (Dispatches) - India banned wheat exports today, just days after saying it was targeting record shipments this year, as a scorching heatwave curtailed output and domestic prices soared to an all-time high.



The government said it would still allow exports backed by already issued letters of credit and to those countries that request supplies "to meet their food security needs".

Global buyers were banking on supplies from the world's second-biggest wheat producer after exports from the Black Sea region plunged following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February. Prior to the ban, India had aimed to ship a record 10 million tons this year.

The ban could drive up global prices to new peaks and hit poor consumers in Asia and Africa. "The ban is shocking," a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading firm said. "We were expecting curbs on exports after two to three months, but it seems like the inflation numbers changed the government's mind."

Rising food and energy prices pushed India's annual retail inflation up towards an eight-year high in April, strengthening economists' view that the central bank would have to raise interest rates more aggressively to curb prices.

Wheat prices in India have risen to record high, in some spot markets to as high as 25,000 rupees per ton, versus government fixed minimum support price of 20,150 rupees.

Earlier this week, India outlined its record export target for the 2022/23 fiscal year that started on April 1, adding it would send trade delegations to countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, Indonesia and Philippines to explore ways to further boost shipments.

But a sharp and sudden rise in temperatures in mid-March means the crop size could be smaller than expected at around 100 million tons or even lower, a New Delhi-based dealer with a global trading firm said. The government had estimated production would hit an all-time high of 111.32 million tonnes.

"The government's procurement has fallen more than 50 per cent. Spot markets are getting far lower supplies than last year. All these things are indicating lower crop," the dealer said.

Cashing in on a rally in global wheat prices after Russia invaded Ukraine, India exported a record 7 million tons of wheat in the fiscal year to March, up more than 250 per cent from the previous year.

"The rise in wheat price was rather moderate, and Indian prices are still substantially lower than global prices," said Rajesh Paharia Jain, a New Delhi-based trader.

Erdoğan, Aliyev Inaugurate Turkey's New Rize-Artvin Airport



ANKARA (Dispatches) - The Turkish and Azerbaijani presidents met Saturday and jointly inaugurated the Rize-Artvin Airport, Turkey's second airport built on a reclaimed area in the rugged northeastern Black Sea region.

The first flight to the airport, Turkish Airlines (THY) flight 2538, which took off from Istanbul at 8:30 a.m. local time (5:30 a.m. GMT) landed at the Rize-Artvin airport at 10:35 a.m. local time (7:35 a.m. GMT).

Turkish Transport and Infrastructure Minister Adil Karaismailoğlu welcomed the passengers. Turkish Airlines CEO Bilal Ekşi was the first to step out of the plane and spoke to journalists about the significance of the airport.

The THY plane carrying 320 passengers was renamed "Rize-Artvin" to mark the inauguration and the aircraft was piloted by Mustafa İnanç Ersoy, a native of the Pazar district of Rize.

This aerial image captured on May 13, 2022 shows the Rize-Artvin Airport with the coastline in the background, in Rize, northeastern Turkey. (DHA Photo)

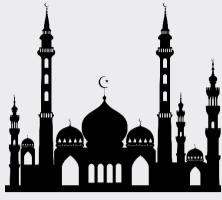
President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Azerbaijani President İlham Aliyev later arrived at the airport using charter flights.

In his speech, Aliyev reminded Turkey's support in their victory in the Karabakh war and said that most of the companies working with the airport currently are working to rebuild regions liberated from the Armenian occupation.

President Erdoğan, a native of Rize's Güneysu district, said the number of airports in Turkey rose from 26 to 57 during successive Justice and Development Party (AK Party) governments.

The airport, the second in Turkey built using sea embankment after Ordu-Giresun Airport, has an annual capacity of 3 million passengers.

It is also the fifth airport in the world built on an area reclaimed from the sea, using 100 million tons of rocks in the process.



PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:00
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:23
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:18
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	05:57

26. That Day, the dominion as of right and truth, shall be (wholly) for ((Allah))
 Most Merciful: it will be a Day of dire difficulty for the Misbelievers.
 27. The Day that the wrong-doer will bite at his hands, he will say,
 "Oh! would that I had taken a (straight) path with the Messenger."
 Surah 25. The Criterion, The Standard (26 - 27)

Macron Starts Second Term With Challenges Mounting

PARIS (Dispatches) - French President Emmanuel Macron formally begins his second term in office on Saturday, maintaining suspense about his new government ahead of parliamentary elections next month that will shape his next five years in power.

The 44-year-old scored a solid victory in April 24 presidential polls against far-right leader Marine Le Pen, but still needs a majority in parliament to be able to push through his domestic reform agenda.

The identity of Macron's new government is expected to set the tone for campaigning, with the president suggesting he intends to name only the second woman prime minister in modern French history.

Speculation has been rife in the French media, with UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay and current Labour Minister Elisabeth Borne seen as possible candidates, but Macron has taken his time to name a replacement for outgoing Premier Jean Castex.

"It's been decided, but no one knows who it is," a presidential advisor told AFP on condition of anonymity.

An announcement is expected early next week.

Macron's Republic on the Move party has been renamed Renaissance ahead of the parliamentary polls on June 12 and 19, with several centrist and centre-right parties set to compete under the collective pro-Macron banner of "Together".

France's splintered left-wing parties have also agreed a tie-up under the leadership of former Trotskyist Jean-Luc Melenchon who has set his sights on a parliamentary majority to thwart Macron's plans.

"To go from around 60 MPs (in the current parliament) to a majority is highly improbable, but the dynamic created by the new union could mean they make major progress," Frederic Dabi, head of the Ifop polling group, told AFP this week.

Le Pen's National Rally and France's ailing mainstream right-wing party, the Republicans, are also hoping to bounce back from their disappointment in the presidential election by securing significant representation in the 577-seat parliament.

Macron won re-election with promises to continue his broadly pro-business and pro-EU policies of his first term, with more tax cuts, welfare reform and pledged a new emphasis on environmental protection for the next five years.

The biggest change is expected to be in his style of governing.

The former investment banker repeatedly promised "a new method" that will be less top-down -- a move designed to tackle his reputation for elitism and high-handedness.



"For it to work, there needs to be results that are concrete and visible to people," Bernard Sananes, the head of polling group Elabe, told AFP. "If it's just about showing you're listening to people, that's great but it won't be enough."

Others wonder whether the more consultative style is in keeping with the temperament of a president who is known to centralize decision-making and once theorized that French people wanted a king-like figure at the center of national life.

His short-term domestic priority is expected to be tackling a cost-of-living crisis that dominated the presidential campaign due to sharp rises in energy prices and other goods linked to product shortages and the war in Ukraine.

In foreign policy, where Macron will have a free hand as president irrespective of the parliamentary result, he has promised to work to deepen the 27-member European Union while managing the fallout from the Ukraine conflict.

Macron has positioned himself as a key link to the Kremlin through his regular talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, while also authorizing weapons deliveries to Ukraine and offering the partly occupied country his full support.

"Rarely has our world and our country been confronted with such a combination of challenges," Macron said as he was inaugurated for his second term on May 7.

Iran-Qatar...

FROM PAGE 1

Recent developments in the region have moved in a way that countries can solve their problems through dialogue as the Supreme Leader has emphasized, and Tehran and Doha can be major actors in resolving regional disputes provided that other countries show logic.



The recent visit of Qatari Emir to Tehran may bring Saudi officials to their senses for normalizing ties with Tehran and Doha instead of reliance on the U.S. and the Zionist regime for solving their problems.

Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Oman can form a strong bloc in the West Asia because they have enough wealth and power to overcome the regional problems provided that they stop relying on countries beyond the region.

Now it is also good time for Iran to take advantage of this good and amicable tie with Qatar to increase its all-out cooperation and in all fields especially in the trade. Qataris have shown their good will for boosting trade with Iran but Iranian traders have been passive or ignored this good opportunity and it is expected under President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi the trade between Iran and Qatar to increase and Qatar to become one of Tehran's major trade partners but this needs a strong determination and cooperation from traders and businessmen of the two countries and above all the support of both governments that so far have shown their interests for broadening this tie.

Although Qatar is small in size but it is big and strong in determination and spreading friendship, and this is what the Islamic Republic of Iran seeks as Tehran welcomes friendship with any country which is sincere and looking for a true friendship based on respecting mutual interests.

Oil Exports...

FROM PAGE 1

Elsewhere in his remarks, he said that Iran needs to do every effort to retake its share in the competitive international market and find new customers.

The National Iranian Oil Company is seeking to sell its oil at the highest volume possible, said the deputy petroleum minister, expressing the country's readiness to double its oil exports. Khojasteh-Mehr said the country's exports have witnessed a 40 percent hike in spite of sanctions.

Elaborating on the investment in the upstream sector, he said \$160 billion have been agreed to be allocated to it, of which \$90 billion will be allotted to the oil industry and \$70 billion to the gas industry.

Lebanese Head to...

FROM PAGE 1

"The ballot box revolution is the cleanest and most honest revolution. Revolt against everyone who considers you a mere commodity! Revolt against political blackmail! Revolt against moral decadence and loss of values! Revolt against those who stole your money and deposits! Revolt against those who obstructed every step," Aoun said.

"It can protect the rest of your rights or expose the thieves! Revolt against those who incite and favor sedition and possibly civil war." The economic and financial crisis in Lebanon is mostly linked to the sanctions that the United States and its allies have imposed on the country as well as foreign intervention in the Arab nation's domestic affairs.

The final results of the parliamentary elections in Lebanon are expected to be announced on Monday, with the new legislature set to elect a new president after Aoun's term ends in October.

Imran Khan Says Nuking Pakistan Better Than Giving Power to Thieves



ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Issuing a weird statement, former Prime Minister Imran Khan said that "dropping an atomic bomb would have been better than handing over the helm to the thieves".

Khan made these remarks while interacting with reporters on Friday at his Banigala residence, according to The News International.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman also said that he was shocked to see the "thieves" being foisted on the country, adding that dropping an atomic bomb would have been better than handing over the helm to these people.

According to The News International, Khan said those powerful people who would tell him the tales of corruption of the "previous rulers" started advising him to focus on his government's performance instead of the graft charges against others.

He further said that the thieves brought into power destroyed every institution and the judicial system, asking now which government official would probe the cases of "these criminals".

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that Imran Khan is "poisoning" the minds of the people of Pakistan with his speeches targeting state institutions. "The nation has been divided as Khan repeatedly called (the then-Opposition and now government) thieves and dacoits," Shehbaz had said during the first regular session of the National Assembly since the new government's formation.

The PTI chairman had warned Shehbaz Sharif's government that no power could stop them from entering the federal capital during the long march to be held on May 20.

He warned the federal government led by Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) that over two million people will reach Islamabad to get real independence and to protest against the "imported government," ARY News reported.

Khan told the Shehbaz Sharif-led government that two million people will come to the federal capital irrespective of how many containers are put up to create hindrances.

"Our opponents say if the temperature is high, then people will not come out. Put as many containers as you want, but 2 million people will come to Islamabad," said Imran Khan.

China Looks to Spur Job Prospects for Record Number of New Graduates

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China will offer subsidies, tax breaks and easier loans to boost prospects for college graduates, the cabinet said on Friday, as a record number prepare to enter the workforce this year amid downside risks to economic growth stemming from COVID-19 curbs.

The subsidies are aimed at small firms, while graduates launching start-ups stand to get tax breaks, easier loan terms and even rent-free premises, the general office of the State Council, or cabinet, said in a notice.

"China ... encourages employers in COVID-hit regions to sign labour contracts with college graduates online," it said, promising support for smaller and medium-size enterprises that hire more college graduates.

China wants to promote healthy development of the online platform economy, it added, referring to a sector that is a big source of jobs, crucial at a time when a record 10.76 million are set to finish college this year.

"Red lights' and 'green lights' will be set up in order to promote healthy development of the platform economy and drive more jobs," the notice said, referring to a system of incentives.

But the worst COVID-19 outbreaks since 2020 have added to the pressures students face, and put at risk the small firms that are a mainstay of the world's second largest economy.



China's "dynamic clearance" policy against the Omicron variant of coronavirus has led to full or partial lockdowns in dozens of cities, including a six-week halt citywide in the commercial centre of Shanghai.

Small businesses, in particular, suffered in the accompanying disruptions to services and logistics.

China wants to add more than 11 million urban jobs

this year, rising to as many as 13 million, Premier Li Keqiang said in March. But recently he has called the employment situation "complicated and grim."

Li added, "Stabilising employment is critical to people's livelihood, and is the key support for the economy to operate within a reasonable range," in remarks prepared for a teleconference with provincial leaders on Saturday.

China's surveyed urban jobless rate hit its highest in nearly two years in March at 5.8%, while the rate for job seekers aged between 16 and 24 reached 16.0%, the highest since July 2021, official data showed.

Policymakers should aim to get the labour market back on track to keep the economy growing, even if the annual GDP growth target could be hard to meet, analyst Julian Evans-Pritchard, of Capital Economics, said in a note on Thursday.

Afghan Families Move to Iran

TEHRA (PressTV) - A rising number of Afghan families have moved to neighboring Iran after the Taliban government failed to deliver on its promise to allow girls to recommence their education at schools following a disgraceful U.S. pullout.

Before and after the Taliban's return to power following the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, the group kept telling girls that they would be allowed to attend schools, but as thousands of teenage girls across the country were prepared to return to schools on March 23, the decision was reversed.

Taliban guards posted outside schools barred their entry, leaving students in tears as they headed back home with books in hand. "They would look at the girls and say: 'Go home. Even studying this much should be enough for you all,'" the Middle East Eye quoted Nilofar, a teacher in the western province of Herat, as saying.

Following the Taliban's move, sources, who spoke to the Middle East Eye in Iran's northeastern city of Mashhad, said that enrollment at schools catering for Afghan refugees had increased over the last six weeks, particularly for young girls.

A principal at one such school said that although education might not be the primary factor pulling people towards Iran, it was a significant one.

"There are major issues with insecurity and the economy," the principal, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said. "But if education isn't the number one reason for these families to come here, it's definitely high up."

Zainab Sajadi, the principal at a non-governmental school for Afghan refugees in Mashhad, told MEE that the enrollment of undocumented students had risen since the Taliban takeover last summer.

"We received hundreds of new students. Our classrooms are completely full," Sajadi said. "We don't have enough chairs. Some students stand in class, others have to share their chairs."

The principal added that the school had started to hold three different shifts of classes a day as 60 percent of the pupils were Afghan girls, with the teachers doing extra lessons voluntarily and without additional pay.

"They are the most intelligent students in our school," she told MEE. "I can see just how much they are starving for education. Even if we keep teaching three shifts a day and continue enrolling students, there will still be thousands of other students who will be unable to attend school."

Italy PM Calls for Deeper Ties, Balanced Trade With Mediterranean Countries

ROME (Dispatches) - Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi has said that he wants to deepen ties with Mediterranean countries and help balance trade between the 22 countries that border the Mediterranean Sea.

Speaking at the "Verso Sub" (Toward the South) gathering of the Ambrosetti Forum in Sorrento, part of the southern Italian metropolis of Naples, most of Draghi's remarks were aimed at ways to help the development of the less economically developed southern regions of Italy.

But the prime minister also discussed the need to strengthen ties in the Mediterranean region. Draghi said Italy would spend around 1.5 billion euros (\$1.6 billion) to modernise shipping ports in southern parts of Italy to promote more trans-Mediterranean trade.

He discussed improving access to food, which has been curbed during the Russia-Ukraine conflict and which threatened "the stability in Africa and the Middle East."

He also focused on energy in the wake of Italy penning new energy supply deals with Algeria and Egypt as the country sought to wean itself off of Russian gas supplies.

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Bouwman Wins Hilly Giro stage 7

POTENZA (Dispatches) - Outsider Koen Bouwman won stage 7 of the Giro d'Italia when four riders escaped from the main peloton along the 196km route from Diamante to Potenza. Spanish rider Juan Pedro Lopez of Trek retains the overall leader's pink jersey while Simon Yates and Richard Carapaz finished at the same time as the other title pretenders 2min 59sec adrift of the winner. Bouwman rode the final kilometres with his team leader the 2017 Giro winner Tom Dumoulin, a third Dutchman in Bauke Mollema, and Italy's Davide Formolo of Team UAE.

MotoGP to Retire Rossi's Number 46 at Mugello

ROME (Dispatches) - MotoGP said it will retire Italian great Valentino Rossi's number 46 from the championship at his home grand prix in Tuscany in two weeks' time. Rossi won nine world titles, including seven in the top tier, registering 115 race wins and 235 podium finishes in total before he called time on his career last year after a quarter of a century in grand prix racing. A showman on the bike and off it, and famed for his post-victory antics, 'The Doctor' last won a race in 2017 with Yamaha in the Dutch TT at Assen.

Liverpool Win FA Cup Final in Shoot-Out Against Chelsea

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool held their nerve to win the FA Cup for the first time since 2006 after a dramatic penalty shoot-out against Chelsea as the quadruple chasers kept their history bid alive on Saturday.

Jurgen Klopp's side won 6-5 on penalties at Wembley as Greek defender Kostas Tsimikas was the unlikely hero with the decisive kick after Alisson Becker kept out Mason Mount's effort.

A hard-fought final had finished a 0-0 draw after extra-time, setting the stage for a nerve-jangling shoot-out that featured misses by Chelsea's Cesar Azpilicueta and Sadio Mane, whose shot was saved by Edouard Mendy when he had a chance to clinch the trophy.

For the second time this season, Liverpool emerged victorious against Chelsea on penalties, having already beaten them 11-10 following another 0-0 draw in the League Cup final in February.

Liverpool's triumph keeps them in the hunt to become the first English team to win all four major trophies in a single season.

With two prizes already secured, the Reds will hope for a slip from Premier League leaders Manchester City, who are three points clear of them in the title race with two games left for both teams.

Even if Liverpool are unable to win a second English title in three seasons, they could still cap an astonishing campaign by winning the Champions League final against Real Madrid in Paris on May 28.

With that ambition in mind, Klopp's only concern as he danced jubilantly in front of the Liverpool supporters amid a swirling mist of red flare smoke was whether his team will be at full strength against Real.

Liverpool lost Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk to injuries that could rule them out of their last two Premier League games next week and will spark fears about their ability to recover in time for the Champions League final.



Liverpool have won both domestic cups in the same season for the first time since 2000-01, with Klopp getting his hands on the famous old trophy for the first time.

For Chelsea, it was a painful third successive FA Cup final defeat after previous losses to Leicester and Arsenal.

Liverpool made a blistering start as they swarmed forward in a blur of swift passes and relentless pressing.

Diaz should have put Liverpool ahead after accelerating onto a sublime pass from Trent Alexander-Arnold, who caressed the ball through Chelsea's defence with the outside of his boot. Diaz's tame shot was saved by Mendy, but the ball was still rolling towards goal until Trevoh Chalobah scrambled back to hack clear at the last moment. With Tuchel gesticulating furiously on the touchline, Chelsea dug in and finally turned back the red tide.

Mount led their first serious raid, crossing for Christian Pulisic to clip his shot just wide.

Pulisic carried the fight to Liverpool again moments later, slipping his pass to Alonso, who should have scored but took a poor first touch and scuffed his shot straight at Alisson Becker.

Diogo Jota wasted a golden chance to give Liverpool the lead soon after his introduction as Salah's replacement, the Portugal forward volleying over from Andrew Robertson's cross.

Tuchel had sent on his penalty-saving specialist keeper Kepa Arrizabalaga ahead of the League Cup final shoot-out in a move that backfired.

Tuchel stuck with Mendy this time, but the result was still the same.

Klopp admitted Liverpool's remarkable season would be a disappointment if they only finished with the League Cup, but he no longer has to worry about that.

Hazard Wants to Stay at Real Madrid

MADRID (Dispatches) - Eden Hazard will stay at Real Madrid next season as the Belgian is determined to prove his worth after a nightmare three years, Carlo Ancelotti said on Saturday.

Hazard was one of the best players in the world when he joined Real Madrid for an initial €100 million in 2019 but he has been plagued by injury problems since moving to Spain.

The 31-year-old underwent surgery on his right ankle at the end of March in the hope of solving the latest in a long line of fitness issues.

Even when available this season, Hazard has been reduced to a bit-part role in the team but Ancelotti insists the plan is not for him to leave this summer.

"We haven't spoken about that, the plan is quite clear," Ancelotti said in a press conference.

"He has a lot of motivation because he hasn't had a good time these last few years and he wants to show all of his quality, which for many reasons he hasn't been able to do."

Hazard is available again and could face Cadix on Sunday after his latest operation removed a metal plate that was inserted to stabilise his ankle in March 2020.

But he faces a fight to establish himself in Real Madrid's starting line-up next season, with Vinicius Junior emerging as one of the team's most explosive players this term and Kylian Mbappe expected to arrive from Paris Saint-Germain this summer.

Donnarumma Warns PSG

PARIS (Dispatches) - Gianluigi Donnarumma has warned Paris Saint-Germain that they must choose between him and rival goalkeeper Keylor Navas next season.

Italian Donnarumma signed from AC Milan last summer to join veteran Navas, 35, who has been in the French capital since leaving Real Madrid in 2019.

Despite stressing his "very good relationship" with Navas, Donnarumma insisted it was out of the question to share the job next season.

"No, I think it will surely not happen like that, because I think the club will make choices," Donnarumma told AFP in an interview.

"We're two good guys, we understand the situation, but it was hard, and for him too, but let's say that we managed it well."

Donnarumma said "yes of course" he wanted to stay next season with his contract running until 2026.

The 23-year-old lifted his first league title with PSG, while for Costa Rican Navas it was a second in France to join the La Liga trophy and three Champions League trophies he won in Spain.

"It's beautiful, it's my first league title, I'm very happy, and it's my first trophy with the Paris Saint-Germain shirt," said Donnarumma.

"I'm very proud to belong to a great, very ambitious club, always aiming higher."

Donnarumma arrived in France after being named the best player in the European championships which Italy won.

"The debut was not easy, because it was my first outside Italy, in a new club, a new city (but) pressure, no," explained Donnarumma, who had spent six years in Milan.

"I feel a big family behind me, a big club, the welcome was great, and after it was easier for me."

Donnarumma said it hadn't been an "easy" season, giving it seven out of 10.

Lewandowski Wants to Leave Bayern



WOLFSBURG (Dispatches) - Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski has informed the club's boss that he wants to leave and not extend his contract with the German champions, Bayern sports director Hasan Salihamidzic said.

Speaking ahead of Bayern's final game of the Bundesliga season at VfL Wolfsburg, Salihamidzic confirmed widespread reports

that the Bundesliga's second-highest all-time scorer could be on his way out despite having a contract until 2023.

"I spoke with Lewa. In that discussion he informed me that he does not want to accept our offer to extend the contract and that we would like to leave the club," Salihamidzic told Sky Germany.

"He said he wants to do something else. But our position has not changed. The fact is he has a contract to June 30, 2023."

The 33-year-old Pole joined in 2014 from Borussia Dortmund and has won the German league every year since then as well as the Champions League.

Guardiola Slams Former United Stars Over Man City Criticism

LONDON (Dispatches) - Pep Guardiola has hit back at former Manchester United stars Patrice Evra and Dimitar Berbatov for criticizing the character of his Manchester City side after their painful Champions League exit.

Guardiola was infuriated by comments from the two players after City's defeat over two legs against Real Madrid in the semi-finals of the competition.

City conceded twice in the final minutes and eventually lost 6-5 on aggregate after the tie went to extra-time.

Evra said Guardiola's side lacked personality and leaders, while Berbatov questioned their concentration and focus.

City have responded in devastating fashion by scoring 10 goals in two games to move to the brink of a fourth Premier League title in five seasons.

Guardiola, who was also frustrated by recent criticism from former Real Madrid midfielder Clarence Seedorf, was scathing in his response to the doubters.

For ammunition the City boss referred to his Barcelona team, which outplayed United in the 2009 and 2011 Champions League finals. Both Evra and Berbatov featured for United in 2009, while Evra was in the side that lost again two years later.

"Special former players like Berbatov, Seedorf and Evra, and these types of people, weren't there," Guardiola said on Friday.

"I've played against them, and I didn't see this kind of personality when we destroyed United in the Champions League final."



Tsitsipas Reach Rome Final, Swiatek Demolishes Sabalenka

ROME (Dispatches) - Stefanos Tsitsipas moved into the Italian Open final after beating Alexander Zverev 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 in an entertaining last four battle in Rome.

Monte Carlo Masters champion Tsitsipas impressed on a boiling hot centre court at the Foro Italico, continuing his dominance of two-time ATP Finals winner Zverev to reach his first ever final in the Italian capital.

Saturday's clash was the third semi-final between the pair in the space of a month after they shared the honors in Monte Carlo and Madrid.

Tsitsipas came into the match having won seven of the pair's 11 matches and a 3-1 record on clay against Zverev, and he fought back from a set down to book his place in the final and a probable showdown with Novak Djokovic.

The match turned at the start of the second set, when Tsitsipas won the first three games — saving two break points in the third — which ensured he drew level.

From there Zverev crumbled and the way he eventually lost the encounter, throwing away his own serve to love with two unforced errors, highlighted how Tsitsipas had ground him down.

Top seed Djokovic is chasing a sixth title in Rome ahead of Roland Garros later this month and faces Casper Ruud later Saturday.

Iga Swiatek cruised into the women's final by crushing Aryna Sabalenka in straight sets 6-2, 6-1 to put her one game from a fifth straight tournament win.

